

# WARD NEWS

Ward 4 - Councilmember Stark

[www.stpaul.gov/ward4](http://www.stpaul.gov/ward4)

651.266.8640



## **Saint Paul City Council's Ward 4 E-Newsletter Volume 7, September 2008**

### **What's inside:**

Republican National Convention

Light Rail Update

Ward 4 Photo Contest

### **Reflections on the Republican National Convention**

As you can imagine, much of my time and thinking over the past two weeks has been spent on the events surrounding the Republican National Convention, and the responses to those events. Hosting the Republican National Convention has been quite a roller-coaster ride for all of us, and nearly everyone I've spoken to is glad that it's over. Political conventions have to happen somewhere to support the work of democracy. The convention certainly came with headaches and problems, but I trust Saint Paul to handle those headaches and problems better than any other city.

My office was flooded with e-mails and phone calls following the convention, some from Ward 4 residents, and others from outside the city and even beyond Minnesota. Some of the communication I received praised the police for a job well done under difficult circumstances. More of the communications raised serious concerns about police conduct, and the fact that due to the intense police presence in downtown and in our neighborhoods, Saint Paul simply did not feel like the city we know and love.

Like all of you, I am an ardent supporter of our American rights to assemble, to express ourselves freely, and to have a free press. Unfortunately for Saint Paul, for the thousands of peaceful demonstrators, and for our police officers, a small subset of demonstrators came not just to express themselves but to disrupt the convention proceedings and to wreak havoc. Yet many of you witnessed first-hand or have seen video footage of events where law enforcement officials appear to be over-stepping or over-reacting to the actions of protestors (or bystanders), or detaining or otherwise preventing the efforts of media and others to document events. It's our right and responsibility to ask questions about the events and the behavior of law enforcement and protestors alike. Many of the stories we have heard and images we have seen - from both sides - may not be the full story, and I intend to wait for as full a picture of events as possible before making judgments.

Let's get the full perspective of our law enforcement officials who were put in very difficult situations, trying to balance our citizens' right to free speech with the rights of the RNC delegates to safely and freely assemble. Let's also hear from our neighbors who were caught up in, or witnessed events that raised serious concerns about the conduct of law enforcement.

I have recently joined others in calling for a full and open, independent investigation of these events. The planned and implemented tactics of the various law enforcement personnel should be thoroughly reviewed both independently and internally, with an eye toward balancing the right to free speech and press with the need to protect people and property from harm.

Any individual claims will be settled openly and fairly in courts of law in the coming months, and the City and the Department should apologize for any harm or mistakes that were made.

If you or someone you know experienced or witnessed police misconduct first hand, it is very important that you file a complaint as soon as possible. Information about filing a complaint can be found [here](#):



<http://www.stpaul.gov/index.asp?NID=2302>. I would also be interested in hearing from you about firsthand experiences during the RNC.

Police Chief John Harrington will debrief the City Council on these events in the coming weeks. I have been having as many interactions and conversations as I can with people who participated in protests or witnessed events first-hand. I support the Mayor's proposed independent investigation of the week's events, and will urge that the investigation be as comprehensive as possible. I will be working with residents and my colleagues to create other opportunities for the community, elected officials, the police department, and other interested parties to have an open and honest dialogue about what transpired and what we can all learn from it. I believe we have work to do to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the residents of Saint Paul, and I'm confident that we are all up to that task.

### **Light Rail Project Update**

On September 5th, the day after the RNC ended, the Metropolitan Council submitted the federal application to gain approval to move from Preliminary Engineering into Final Design. Thanks to the work of the State Legislature and the five counties that approved the ¼% sales tax increase, every dollar of "local" (non-federal) funding for the project has been secured.

I am still working to ensure that the project ends up benefitting our community as much as possible, by advocating for solutions to the loss of on-street parking on University Avenue and for the full funding of the Hamline, Victoria, and Western stations. I have also been appointed as Saint Paul's representative to the Grant Evaluation and Ranking System (GEARS) Committee of the new County Transit Improvement Board (CTIB). The GEARS will make recommendation to the CTIB about which proposed transitway improvement projects should be funded in the five county area covered by the new sales tax.

### **Ward 4 Photo Contest**

For those of you who have been to the Ward 4 office in City Hall, you know it could use some more color and reminders of "life in Ward 4." So Samantha has dreamt up a photo contest in which the top photos would be framed and hung in our office. I also think it would be great to have the "exhibit" travel around to Ward 4 coffee shops prior to settling on the office walls. We will have two sets of contest winners, so that we can rotate the photos.

Please consider submitting photographs and passing this along to your friends and neighbors to spread the word! The deadline is 4:00pm, October 1, 2008.

Two age categories:

- 18 & Under
- 19 & Over

Topic categories:

- Ward 4 places/scenery
- Ward 4 people
- Doing business in Ward 4
- Getting Around Ward 4
- Ward 4 community events
- Ward 4 wildlife & nature

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If taking digital photography:

- Send as JPG format
- Send in highest file size possible
- Do not compress the file
- If you are sending multiple files that are too large for email, please send a CD to the address below.

If using traditional film:

- Use as low a film speed as possible for better resolution when enlarged.

Photo release. For a photograph capturing images of people, you need to have each person's permission to use his/her image. Please use the attached form and return with your entry.

Please direct questions and send your entries to Samantha Henningson ([Samantha.henningson@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Samantha.henningson@ci.stpaul.mn.us)), along with information about age and topic categories. If using actual film pictures, please send the pictures and negatives (we will return negatives) to 15 West Kellogg Blvd, Suite 310-D, City Hall, St Paul, MN 55102-1615.

Best,

Russ

## **Be in the know:**

### Neighborhood Clean-Ups!

If you live in District 14:

Saturday, October 11; 9am to 2pm -- Ford Plant Parking Lot

More information here: <http://www.macgrove.org/node/223>

If you live in Districts 10-13:

Saturday, September 20th; 8AM to 1PM-- North End of State Fairgrounds

More information here: <http://unionparkdc.org/>

### Rock-Tenn Public Meeting - Discussion of Port Authority Recommendations

Monday, September 15, 6:30pm

Wilder Center Auditorium, 451 Lexington Pkwy North

Draft recommendations: [http://www.rtadvisory.org/uploaded/files/825\\_draft\\_report.pdf](http://www.rtadvisory.org/uploaded/files/825_draft_report.pdf)

### Conversation on community impacts of the RNC, hosted by Councilmember Thune

Wednesday, September 24, at 5:30pm

City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor City Hall, 15 West Kellogg

As always, please pass on the Ward 4 e-news to neighbors and friends. Subscribe by emailing [Samantha.Henningson@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Samantha.Henningson@ci.stpaul.mn.us).